Summer Food Safety

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Foodborne Illness Statistics

- An estimated 76 million cases of foodborne illnesses occur each year in the United States.
- According to the Centers for Disease Control, foodborne illness more than doubles during the summer months.
- The two reasons why infections more than double include:
  - Environmental: Hot and humid summer months allow for bacteria in soil, air, and water to grow faster.
  - People: Outdoor activities to include picnicking, barbecuing, and camping increase.
- The majority of the foodborne illness cases are mild and cause symptoms for only a day or two.
- Children between the ages of 1 and 10 are affected more often than any other group but the elderly, pregnant women, and those individuals with compromised immune systems are at a greater risk as well.

Symptoms of Foodborne Illness

- Mild Cases: Nausea, vomiting, cramps, and diarrhea
- Serious Cases: High fever, bloody stool, and prolonged vomiting
- It is important to stay hydrated once vomiting has stopped. Chew ice chips or sip clear fluids.
- Eat only light foods such as bananas, rice, applesauce, toast, crackers, and soup for the next few days.
- Seek emergency treatment if severe pain accompanies illness, if vomiting does not stop in a couple of hours, or if bloody diarrhea is experienced.

Foodborne Illness:
4 Ways to Protect Yourself

- Clean: Wash hands and surfaces often.
  - When at home, use hot soapy water before handling food, after using the bathroom, changing diapers, and handling pets.
  - When away from home, find a clean source of water. If there is none, bring water for cleaning or pack moist towlettes or hand sanitizer.
  - Bring water to clean or use when mixing with food or drinking.
  - Wipe cooking and eating surfaces often.
  - Never re-use plates or utensils before washing them.
  - Rinse fresh fruit and vegetables under warm tap water and dry before eating or packing.
  - Ensure everyone washes their hands before eating.

Foodborne Illness:
4 Ways to Protect Yourself (cont.)

- Separate: Do not cross contaminate during preparation, grilling, and serving.
  - When packing the cooler chest, wrap raw meats securely.
  - Wash plates, utensils, and cutting boards that held raw meat or poultry before using again for cooked food.

Foodborne Illness:

4 Ways to Protect Yourself (cont.)

- Cook: Cook to proper temperatures.
  - Completely thaw meat and poultry before grilling. Use the refrigerator to thaw foods.
  - Take a cooking thermometer along. The outside color of meat or juices are not indicators of doneness.
    - Cook hamburger and other ground meats to an internal temperature of 160ºF and ground poultry to 165ºF.
    - Cook steaks and roasts that have been tenderized, boned, rolled, etc. to an internal temperature of 160ºF for medium and 170ºF for well done. Whole steaks and roasts may be cooked to 145ºF for medium rare.
    - Whole poultry should be cooked to 180ºF in the thigh. Cook breast meat to 170ºF.
  - Cook meat and poultry completely at the picnic site.
  - Always marinate food in the refrigerator. Do not re-use the marinade from the raw meat or poultry on cooked food without boiling it first. It is best to reserve a portion of the marinade prior to starting.
  - Serve first cooked food first. Make sure food is used before it drops below 140ºF and within 2 hours of preparations.

Foodborne Illness:

4 Ways to Protect Yourself (cont.)

- Chill: Refrigerate properly.
  - Chill all ingredients to a salad such as potato or pasta before mixing.
  - Perishable foods like deli meats and potato or pasta salads should be kept in an insulated cooler packed with several inches of ice, ice packs, or containers of frozen water.
  - Preserve the cold temperature of the cooler by replenishing the ice as soon as it starts melting.
  - Consider packing canned beverages in one cooler and perishable food in another since the beverage cooler will be opened more frequently.
  - Keep the cooler in the coolest part of the car or place in the shade. Avoid direct sunlight whenever possible.
  - If you do not plan to eat take-out food such as fried chicken or barbeque within two hours of purchase, plan ahead and chill the food in your refrigerator before packing your cooler.
  - Foods cannot be properly chilled over a period of days.

Safety Tips: Grocery Shopping

- A recent study by the American Meat Institute Foundation found that the temperature of refrigerated food rises approx 8-10 degrees during a typical trip home.
- On longer trips, the temperature can rise nearly 20 degrees.
- Make your grocery shopping trip your last or only stop.
- When shopping:
  - Separate raw meat and poultry from other food in the cart.
  - Select refrigerated and frozen foods last.
  - Pack cold foods together in PAPER bags. Wrap raw meat and poultry in PLASTIC bags to reduce contamination from meat juices.
- If you have a long distance to travel, take a cooler and ice packs along. If that is not practical, put perishable foods near air conditioner vents.
- At home, place meat and poultry in the refrigerator immediately. Freeze poultry and ground meat that will not be used in 1-2 days. Freeze other meat within 4-5 days.

Safety Tips: Coolers

- A full cooler will maintain its cold temperature longer than one that is partially filled.
- Take perishable foods in the smallest quantity needed and pack only the amount of food you think you will use. Pack in reverse order.
- Take food directly from refrigerator to insulated cooler. Keep cold food cold with ice packs and hot food hot by placing in a thermos.
- Pack condiments in small containers rather than taking whole jars.
- Consider packing non-perishable snacks and foods.

Safety Tips: When preparing food…

- Leave the food preparation area to smoke, eat, or drink.
- Upon your return, wash your hands thoroughly. Also, wash hands after contact with unclean surfaces, handling trash or raw meat, using the bathroom, or dirtying your hands during any outdoor activity.
- Tie long hair back or wear a hat or bandanna.
- Do not prepare or serve food if you have been sick with vomiting or diarrhea within the past 24 hours.
- Do not wear loose finger or wrist jewelry or false nails.

Safety Tips: While serving food…

- Before serving wash hands thoroughly. Use a utensil when serving food.
- Grilled food can be kept hot until served by moving it to the side of the grill rack just away from the coals where it will not overcook.
- Use a different utensil and dish for cooking then for serving.
- Keep flies away. Cover trash containers. Do not store meat wrappers and other trash in open cardboard boxes or uncovered containers.
- Do not use fly spray or papers. They contaminate food.
- Keep plates, cups, and utensils and food covered until ready to use.
- When handling plates, cups, or utensils, touch them where food will not be placed. Use handles, rims, and bottoms.

Safety Tips: Melons

- Handle cut melons carefully.
- Thoroughly clean outer surface with a vegetable brush before slicing.
- Any bacteria on the outside of melons can be transferred to the inside when the fruit is cut or peeled.
- Keep work surface and utensils used to prepare melon clean and sanitized.
- Refrigerate sliced melon promptly at 41ºF or lower.

Safety Tips: Leftovers

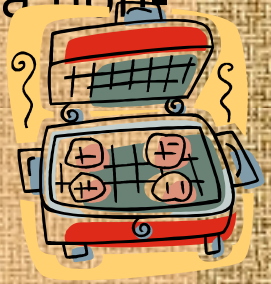
- Food left out for more than 2 hours may not be safe to eat.
- If the ambient temperature is greater than 90ºF, food should not be left out over 1 hour.
- Play it safe.
  - Put leftover perishables back on ice once you finish eating.
  - Use shallow containers to store food.
- When reheating leftovers such as fully cooked meats, grill heat them to 165ºF or until steaming hot.

General Barbeque Grill Safety Precautions

- Grills caused an average of 900 structure and 3,500 outdoor fires in or on home properties in 2002 resulting in a combined direct property loss of $30 million.
- Follow manufacturer’s directions when using, cleaning, and storing grills.
- Never use grills inside of homes, vehicles, tents, campers, or other unventilated space.
- Place grills away from flammable material and at least 10 feet away from any structure.
- Designate the grilling area a “No Play Zone”. Keep kids and pets well away until grill is cool.
- Never leave a grill unattended once it has been lit.
- Avoid exceptionally loose clothing especially long, flowing sleeves that can catch fire.
- Keep a fire extinguisher nearby.
- Clean the grill regularly using a grill brush, crumpled piece of aluminum foil, or oven spray cleaner.
- Before each use, apply non-stick cooking spray to prevent food from sticking.
- Open all vents before and during cooking.
- Long handled grilling tools make grilling easier and safer. Avoid nylon or other materials that might melt.

Safety Tips: Charcoal Grills

- Store charcoal briquettes in a cool, dry area.
- Keep bags of instant lighting charcoal closed to prevent lighter fluid from escaping.
- Only use a starter fluid made for barbeque grills. Never add lighter fluid directly to hot coals.
- Preheat coals on grill for 20-30 minutes or until coals are lightly coated with ash.
- Use proper utensils for safe handling of coals.
- To extinguish coals: place the cover on the grill, close the vents, and allow coals to burn out completely.
- Do not store grill indoors with freshly used coals.
- Let ashes cool for at least 48 hours and dispose in a non-combustible container.



Safety Tips: Gas Grills

- Gas leaks, blocked tubes, and overfilled propane tanks cause most gas grill fires and explosions.
- Before each use:
  - Check the connection between the propane tank and the fuel line. Also, check tubes for blockage from insects, spiders, or food grease.
  - Check hoses for cracking, brittleness, holes and leaks.
  - Move gas hoses as far away as possible from hot surfaces and dripping hot grease. Install heat shield if hoses cannot be moved.
  - Replace scratched or nicked connectors immediately.
  - Check for gas leaks according to manufacturer's instructions. Never use a match to check for leaks. If a leak is detected, turn off the gas immediately. Do not attempt to light the grill until the leak is fixed.
- Keep lighted cigarettes, matches, or open flames away from leaking grill.
- Never store or use flammable liquids near grill.
- Always keep propane containers upright. Never store spare containers under or near grill.
- Transport containers in secure upright position. Never keep filled containers in hot car or car trunk.
- Never attempt to repair a tank valve or appliance yourself.

Conclusion

- Remember food safety starts during the ride from the grocery store and continues to the picnic table.
- Practice the four ways to protect yourself from foodborne illness:
  - Clean
  - Separate
  - Cook
  - Chill

- Grill it safe! Adults and children alike should practice good grilling practices.

Resources:

- Home Safety Council: “Grilling and Ladder Safety” -www.homesafetycouncil.org
- New York State Department of Health: “Barbeque Food Safety Tips” - www.health.ny.us
- Partnership for Food Safety and Education: “Fight BAC!” - www.fightbac.org
- US Department of Agriculture: “Safe Food Handling” - www.fsis.usda.gov
- US Food and Drug Administration: “Foodborne Illness and Disease” - www.cfsan.fda.gov